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CHANNEL ISLANDS

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A SEA-DOMINATED NATIONAL PARK:

ITS PROSPECT AND A PROPOSAL

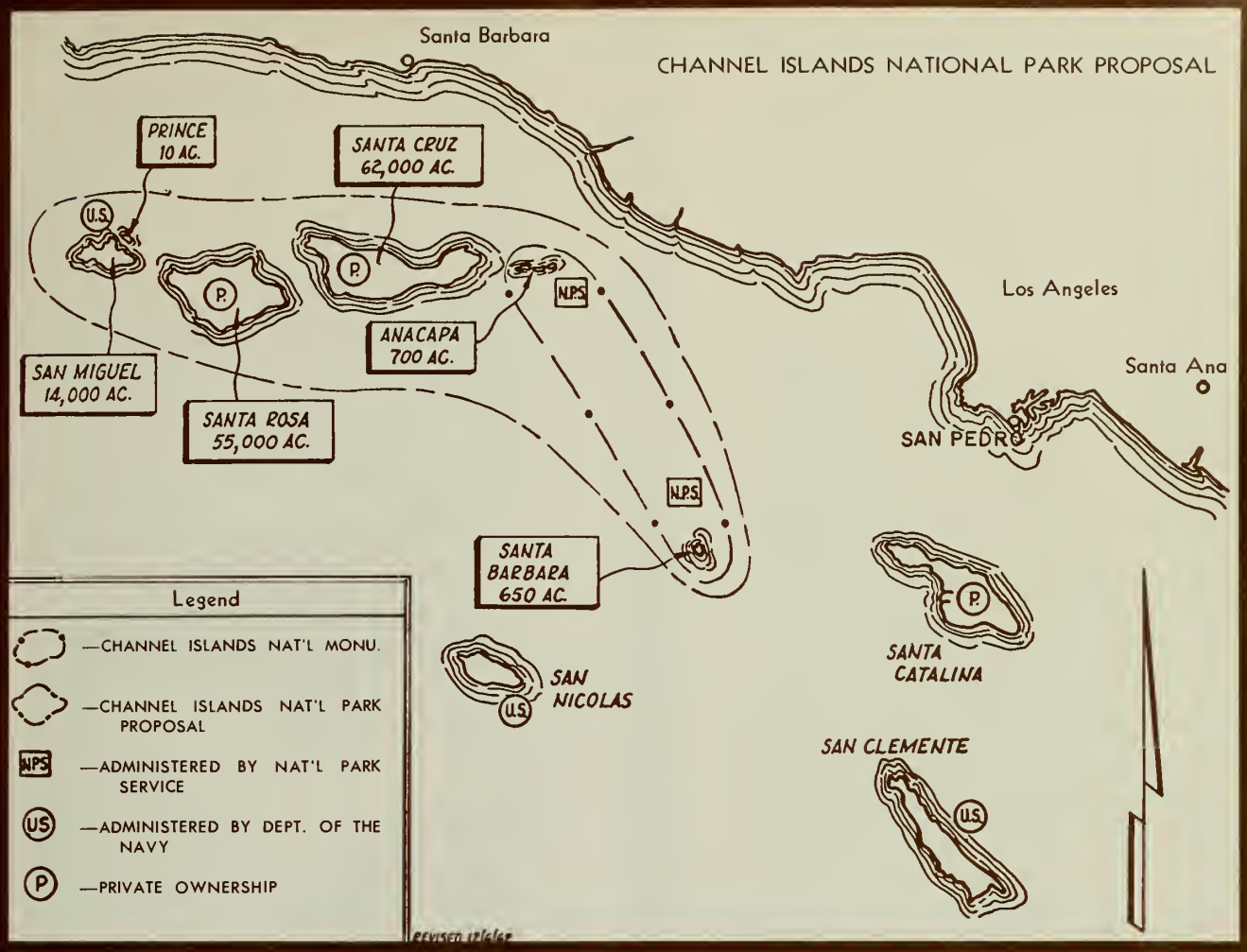
The northern group of the Channel Islands of California presents one of the finest opportunities in America to preserve a combination of island, seashore, and related marine values in a reservation suitable for park use. A proposal has been made by interested conservationists to establish a Channel Islands National Park.

The park as presently proposed would consist of a closely related group of 5 of the 8 Channel Islands, and their surrounding waters situated from 10 to 50 miles off the coast of southern California. Included in the park would be Santa Barbara and Anacapa Islands, which comprise Channel Islands National Monument, San Miguel Island, when it is available (it is now under the jurisdiction of the Department of the Navy), and Santa Cruz and Santa Rosa Islands, both privately owned. The 5 islands include about 132,000 acres of land.

The remaining three islands of the Channel group not now proposed for inclusion in the park are Santa Catalina, San Nicolas, and San Clemente. The first, which is privately owned, has been developed as a resort area for many years. San Clemente has been used intensively as a bombing range, and San Nicolas is, at least for the present, considered too remote from the main group to make it an administrable part of the proposed park. Both are owned and used by the Navy.

The superb qualifications of the northern, 5-island group became apparent during the Pacific Coast Recreation Area Survey completed by the National Park Service in 1959. This and subsequent studies found a combined array of park values not included in the National Park System and unmatched in any other similar area of park potential.

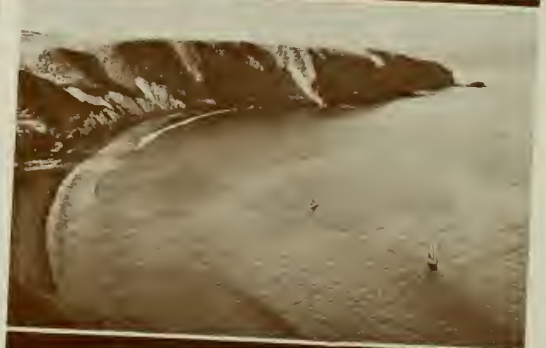
The Channel Islands Are of the Sea. Sandy Beaches, Craggy Headlands, Quiet Coves, and Rookeries of Sea Fauna Are Their Boundary; Isolation Is Their Soul. Mighty Forces Have Both Sculptured Them and Set Them Apart. Within Hailing Distance of the Mainland, the Islands Today Beckon Hurried, Urban Man.



A STRATEGIC RECREATION RESOURCE

The Channel Islands constitute a recreation resource unique to the continental United States: a potential marine park offering a remarkable variety of recreational opportunities to an ever-swelling metropolitan region. Boating, fishing, diving, picnicking, hiking, camping, and exploring the islands' rugged yet inviting terrain are only some of the outdoor activities the islands offer. And there is perhaps no place in the world near so many people where as wide a range of marine mammals can be observed.

The scientific resources of the islands are fragile, however, and the islands' growing accessibility from the increase of private boating places these values in danger. The natural features of the islands and surrounding waters need protection. In national park status the Channel Islands can be both administered for public enjoyment today and conserved for the future. Each of the five islands, briefly described below, contributes significantly to the concept of a marine park among California's offshore islands.



Vignettes of a marine park—

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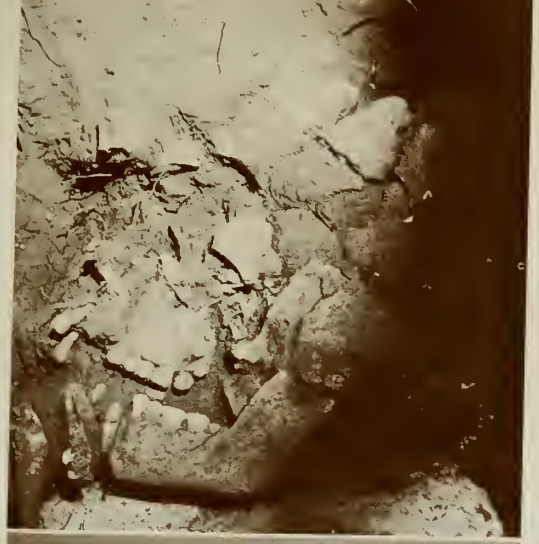

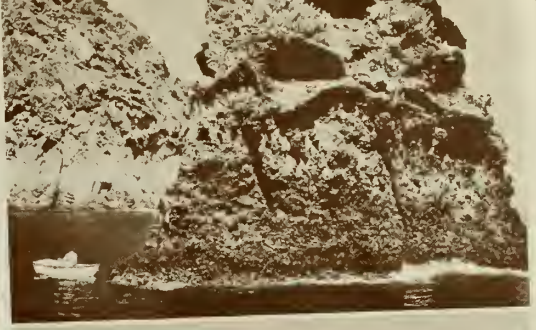

JOAO
RODRIGUES
CABRILHO
PORTUGUESE NAVIGATOR
DISCOVERER OF CALIFORNIA 1542
ISLE OF BURIAL 1543
CABRILLO CIVIC CLUBS
JAN 3 1937

"The Island of San Miguel is Like a Deserted House. It Reeks of Desolation, Memories, and Mysteries Unsung. Here California's Discoverer, Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo, Met His Death in 1543. Civilizations of Indians Lie Buried in the Land. Ghosts of Ship-Wrecked Sailors Haunt its Jagged Reefs."

Thorne Hall

SAN MIGUEL

San Miguel, westernmost in the Channel Island chain, is administered by the Navy. The island comprises about 14,000 acres. Most of it is 400–500 feet in elevation; the highest point is 831 feet. Attractive physical features of San Miguel include 24 miles of unspoiled sandy beaches, scenic cliffs, and sea caves. There are several places where anchorages and landings are possible, Cuyler Harbor being the largest. Several fresh-water springs exist on the island.

San Miguel has archeological and possibly paleontological values not elsewhere represented in the National Park System. Some 50 ancient village sites on the island relate to habitation there and on adjacent islands and the mainland during the past 5,000 years or more. The Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History reports deposits of fossil elephants on San Miguel. Historically, Cuÿler Harbor is thought to be the burial place of Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo, the discoverer of California.

One of the largest known colonies of sea elephants is found on San Miguel, as are colonies of sea lions of two species. Sea otters and fur seals, now rare in California waters, visit the island occasionally. Also present on the island is the San Miguel fox, a distinct variety. These, together with the great rookeries of sea birds and several pairs of nesting American eagles, are in need of protection.

Erosion has occurred on San Miguel, due to grazing activities, presenting an unusually clear example of wind and water action on a denuded surface followed by a period of diminished erosion and marked vegetative recovery. Native vegetation could further re-establish itself over the island in time, given adequate protection. Even now the island presents a fine springtime display of wild flowers.

San Miguel is managed by the Navy Department and is not open to the public.

The Navy Department has sought legislation to make San Miguel part of a Naval oil reserve. The Department of the Interior has not agreed that such designation is warranted, but would not seek to administer the island for park purposes until such time as it was no longer needed by the military. Meanwhile, the two Departments are working on a cooperative agreement for the protection of the island's outstanding scientific values.

Scenic Prince Island, a steep, rocky islet 10 acres in size, is located close to San Miguel on the northeast. It is noted for its colony of nesting sea birds.

"Santa Rosa Lies Three Miles East of San Miguel, Across a Turbulent Passage. Surrounded by Dangerous Shoals and Hemmed in by Nereocystean Kelp, This Island's Coast is High and Precipitous, Pierced by Many Large Caves, and Though Numerous Little Bays Indent the Shores, There Is Really No Good Harbor."

Aubrey Drury

SANTA ROSA

Second of the five in size is Santa Rosa Island, which is privately owned. Santa Rosa, with an area of 55,000 acres, is approximately 15 miles long, with a maximum width of 10 miles.

The 45-mile shoreline of the island varies in character from bold, high, rocky bluffs, to long, low spits of bright white sand and interesting sea caves. Attractive beaches with sand dunes up to 400 feet in height are found on the western end of Santa Rosa. In general, however, the island is mountainous, with many deeply eroded gullies and ravines. The highest point, near the center, is 1,589 feet above sea level. Numerous plateaus exist along the north side of the island.

Annual scientific expeditions of the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History have found Santa Rosa Island to be rich in archeological and paleontological values. The biology on and around the island is also notable. Kelp, a seaweed, surrounds the greater part of Santa Rosa, providing a superlative habitat for food chains upon which larger marine animals subsist, and offering a potential refuge for sea otters. Numerous rookeries of marine waterfowl are found along the west side of the island. The small Channel Island fox is an abundant native species, while the tule elk, Kaibab deer, and Siberian snow deer were stocked there in past years. The vegetation of Santa Rosa is mainly grass and other low ground cover augmented by a few species of trees and shrubs. A great variety of annual and perennial wild flowers, many of them unique, adorn the island.

The Vail and Vickers Ranch utilizes most of Santa Rosa for livestock grazing. A small portion is under cultivation. There is a small military installation at Johnsons Lee on the south side of the island.

"Santa Cruz . . . is an Assortment of Rich, Dark Soil, Rolling Meadows Laced With Oaks, Pines and Almond Trees, Tall Grasses, Vineyards, Fat Cows, Swift-Rising Mountain Ranges, Babbling Brooks, Three Rivers, Temperate Year-Round Climate, Hundreds of Waterfalls Spilling Into the Ocean Over Rugged Jetting Cliffs and Gently Sloping Hills. Even the Endless Parade of Seals That Guard its Secluded Grottos Chortle Happily in the Noonday Sun."

Thorne Hall

SANTA CRUZ

Largest of the Channel Islands group is Santa Cruz. Twenty-one miles long, and averaging 5 miles in width, this privately owned island has a shoreline of about 65 miles and embraces more than 62,000 acres. Its highest point, near the center of the island, is more than 2,400 feet in elevation, and there are many other peaks reaching a height of above 1,700 feet. Its principal stream valley follows a fault between volcanic and sedimentary rock ridges.

Santa Cruz Island has, on the whole, the most varied topography and is the most densely wooded of the Channel Islands group. Its park-like atmosphere makes it highly suitable for camping and enjoyment of scenery. The island is famous for its sea caves, with Painted Cave the largest and best known. This cave has an entrance nearly 70 feet high.

Along the shoreline also are many attractive and well-protected coves, with suitable anchorage for small boats. The clear waters of the sheltered north shore offer opportunity for swimming and observation of marine gardens.

The island supports a number of plant and animal species unique to the Channel Islands—many of them found only on Santa Cruz. There are extensive groves of the unique island pine, a form not found on the mainland. The marine life around Santa Cruz includes an outstanding display of invertebrates, fishes, and plants.

The Stanton Ranch on Santa Cruz Island, including some 55,000 acres, utilizes available grassland for the grazing of livestock. The 6,000-acre Gherini Ranch on the eastern side of the island is used for grazing sheep. A relatively small portion of Santa Cruz is under cultivation, and some land has been leased to the Navy.

Santa Barbara's Giant Sunflowers Transform the Island Into a Golden Spectacle.

Assailed by a Relentless Sea, Anacapa Island Stands as a Lonely Sentinel to the Southern California Coast.

ANACAPA and SANTA BARBARA

The remaining islands proposed for inclusion in a Channel Islands National Park are the two small islands that constitute the present National Monument: Anacapa and Santa Barbara.

Anacapa, comprising 700 acres, is really a slender chain of islands about 5 miles long and half a mile wide. Anacapa is characterized by high sea cliffs, which nesting sea birds find much to their liking. California sea lions also frequent the island, and sea elephants and sea otters visit occasionally. More rare is the Guadalupe fur seal, long thought to be completely exterminated.

Santa Barbara, southernmost and easternmost of the 5 islands in the proposed park, contains 650 acres. It is roughly triangular, its greatest dimension being one and a quarter miles. The island is girdled by almost vertical cliffs ranging from only a few feet to more than 500 in height. Small, rocky bays and occasional sandy beaches offer excellent resting places for marine mammals, and there are large rookeries of sea lions and birds. Numerous caves, rock bridges, offshore pillars and spray-spouting stacks create beautiful and dramatic seascapes.

Santa Barbara Island has the largest single stand of giant coreopsis remaining in the world. When in full bloom, the brilliant golden expanse of these tree-like sunflowers is visible to ships 10 or more miles distant. Both Santa Barbara and Anacapa have magnificent spring wild-flower displays, many of them found only on this group of islands.

Anacapa and Santa Barbara were established as a National Monument in 1938 to provide sanctuary for numerous marine animals and nesting sea birds and to preserve and protect many outstanding examples of nature's adaptations in the plant and animal world. The effects of 500,000 years of geographical isolation on plants and animals can be studied there. But useful as they are for park purposes, they contain only a small part of the potential park values of the three main islands of the northern Channel group.

NATURAL HISTORY and ARCHEOLOGY

These islands are important to science as "evolution factories." Isolated in some cases from the mainland for upwards of a half million years, the plants and animals of the islands have evolved distinctive characteristics unknown elsewhere. Extraordinary too are the variety and richness of the native forms. Spring wild-flower displays rival those of the most famous desert gardens. Sea birds nest by the thousands.

This wealth and variety similarly characterizes the marine fauna. Northern and southern types mingle at the islands, where there are important colonies of sea elephants, sea lions, and seals. It is hoped that sea otters, as yet few in number, will form a colony in this suitable habitat.

The Channel Islands also offer outstanding undersea environments undisturbed by man, uncontaminated by pollution. Protection of such areas is highly important for marine biological research.

Not only do the Channel Islands form a great natural biological laboratory, but they also constitute a museum of geological structures and processes. In these now partly submerged mountains, once connected with the mainland, one can study examples of faulting, volcanism, fossils, canyon development, stream piracy, and erosion.

There is much evidence of prehistoric habitation on the islands. Archeological findings lead to speculation that this is one of North America's oldest inhabited regions, and may prove to be one of the Nation's most important archeological sites.

"More than 29,000 years ago men were broiling dwarf mammoths on a little island off the California Coast, according to George F. Carter, a geographer at the Johns Hopkins University. If true, this would place man in the area some 20,000 years earlier than archeologists had previously estimated. Carter . . . knew that during the last ice age dwarf mammoths roamed the island of Santa Rosa, which was then part of the mainland. If there were also men there at the time, he reasoned, they would have cooked and eaten these animals. On an expedition to Santa Rosa . . . he found charred mammoth bones in several ancient fire sites. Radiocarbon dating put the age of the bones at 29,650 years."

Scientific American, April 1956

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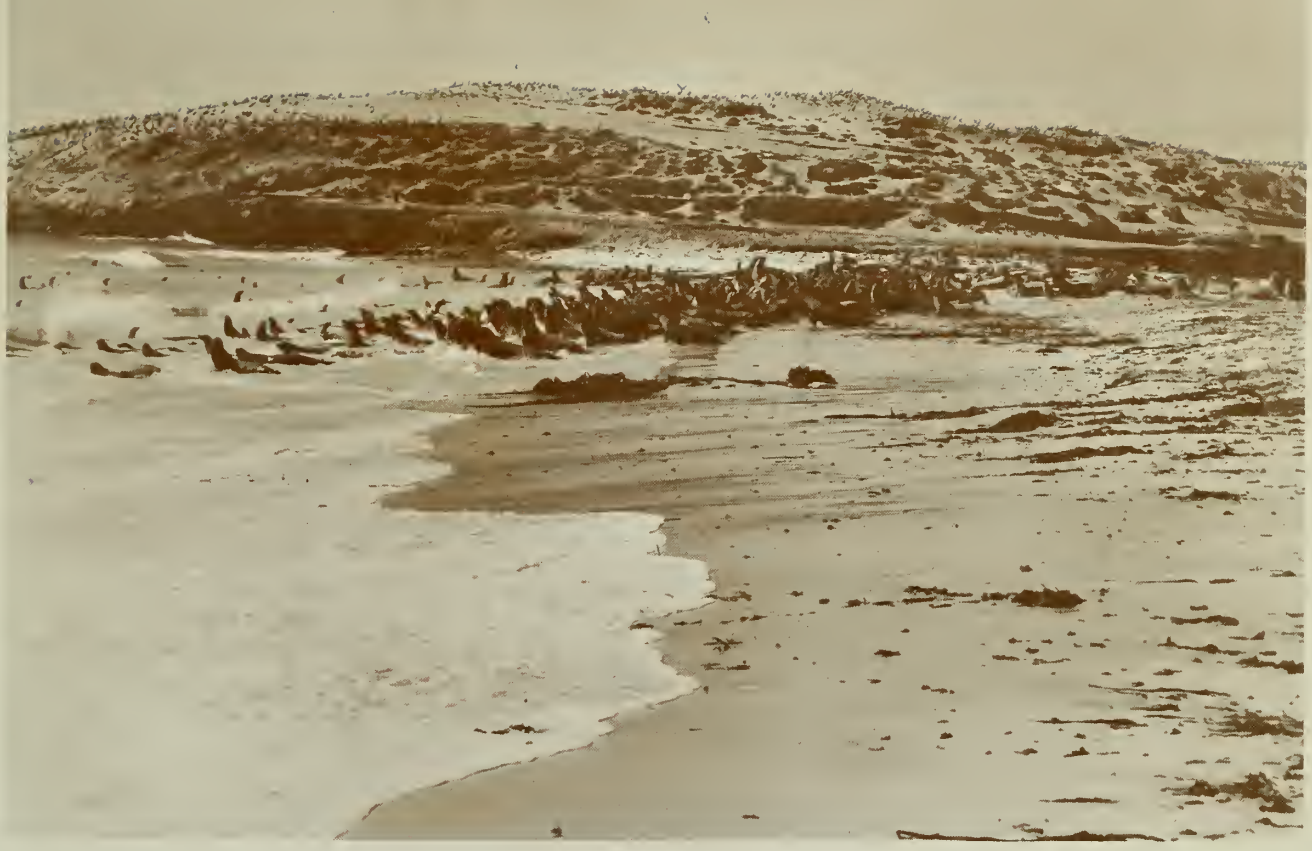

SOME IMPORTANT FACTS ON THE FIVE ISLANDS

Accessibility

Boat transportation is available to Anacapa Island during the summer months and on weekends during other times of the year. Santa Barbara Island is more distant from the mainland and, therefore, not as frequently visited. These two islands and Santa Catalina Island are the only ones now open to the public. In some circumstances permission might be obtained from the owners to visit Santa Cruz and Santa Rosa Islands by boat.

Climate

The Channel Islands have warm dry summers. Rainfall, which occurs during the winter months, averages about 13 inches per year. Fogs are common in the outer islands and in the Santa Barbara Channel. Winds are variable and unpredictable, with westerlies prevailing. Heavy southeasterly storms occur during the winter months, with the outer islands experiencing the most severe weather. Temperatures average 60°: average high 67°; average low 52°.

LAND OWNERSHIP

Anacapa	**700 acres**	538 acres administered by National Park Service; 162 acres Lighthouse reservation—U.S. Coast Guard
Santa Barbara	**650 acres**	582 acres administered by National Park Service and 13-acre Gull Island offshore; 57 acres Lighthouse reservation—U.S. Coast Guard
San Miguel	**14,000 acres**	Administered by Department of the Navy, including 10-acre Prince Island offshore
Santa Cruz	**62,000 acres**	Stanton family owns about 55,000 acres; Gherini family owns remainder. 64 acres leased by Department of Defense for training center
Santa Rosa	**55,000 acres**	Held by Vail estate. 336 acres leased by Air Force

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The Sea and Solitude, Where Man Can Plumb His Place in Nature. Left Behind Are the Cares of An Anxious Life. From the Primeval is Man's Spirit Nourished and His Body Refreshed.

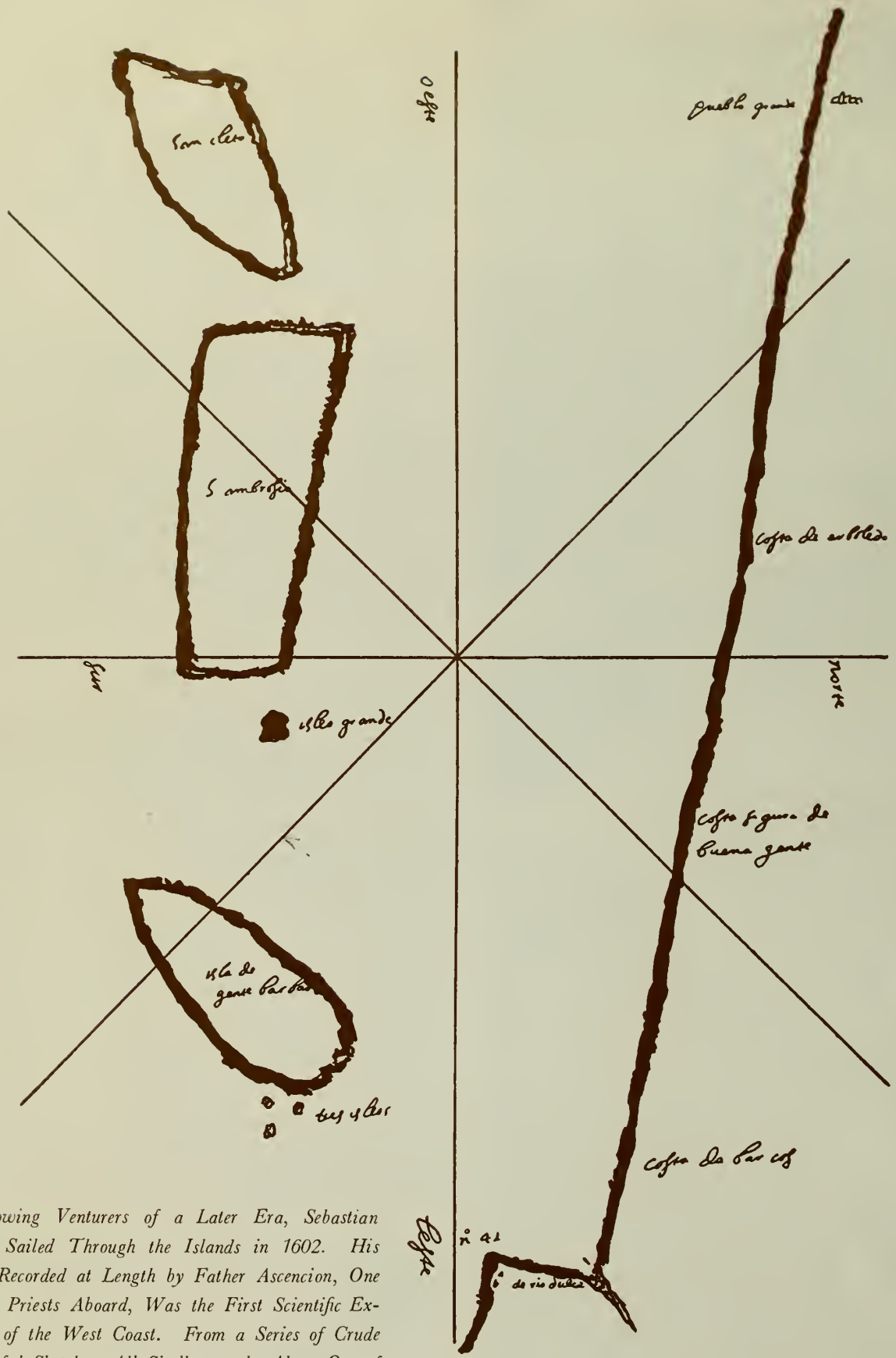
AMERICA'S NATURAL RESOURCES

**Created in 1849,
the Department of the Interior—
America's Department of Natural Resources—
is concerned with
the management, conservation, and
development of the
Nation's water, wildlife,
mineral, forest, and park and
recreational resources.
It also has major responsibilities
for Indian and Territorial affairs.**

**As the Nation's principal
conservation agency,
the Department works to
assure that nonrenewable resources
are developed and used wisely,
that park and recreational
resources are conserved,
and that renewable resources
make their full contribution
to the progress, prosperity, and
security of the United States—
now and in the future.**

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT
OF THE INTERIOR
Stewart L. Udall, Secretary

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Conrad L. Wirth, Director



Foreshadowing Venturers of a Later Era, Sebastian Vizcaino Sailed Through the Islands in 1602. His Voyage, Recorded at Length by Father Ascencion, One of Three Priests Aboard, Was the First Scientific Exploration of the West Coast. From a Series of Crude but Forceful Sketches, All Similar to the Above One of the Channel Islands, the Dangerous California Coast Was Mapped For the First Time.

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